

Emergency Responder

WASHINGTON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION



WASHINGTON MILITARY DEPARTMENT

September-October 2001

Sept. 11 leads to state's first EMAC deployment

Washington State did not have to wait long to be an operational part of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) that has been formed by 42 states and two territories to allow participating states to seek aid from other member states during emergencies.

After officially joining the compact July 22, Washington was one of nine states to respond to a request for assistance for New York City following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Chuck Hagerhjelm, deputy state coordinating officer for the Nisqually Earthquake, was sent in late September to help in New York City's emergency operations center on Pier 92. Their EOC had been in World Trade Center (WTC) Building 7, which was destroyed after the towers collapsed. The pier provided a huge building with ample space for the city's massive response and recovery effort.

While there, he worked on credentialing for access control into the restricted area around the WTC area, and with the computerized logistics support system to ensure that orders for resources were being processed as quickly as possible. Access control was a major challenge due to the number of people and agencies who felt drawn to the site. The city had to take an aggressive position to balance the needs of the emergency workers with the desires of the occupants of the surrounding buildings, which were included within the restricted area.

The state can expect future EMAC deployment requests for various emergencies throughout the country. Would you be ready to go on the next one?



A new concessions building was a major part of the Ferry County Fairgrounds restoration project that was formally dedicated in August. The fairgrounds were damaged in a flood disaster of the spring of 1998. The restoration replaced damaged structures with elevated buildings. (Ferry County photo by Lynne Baldwin)

Hazard Mitigation Grants attract many applicants

There are a total of 67 communities and public agencies that have applied for an initial \$10 million in Hazard Mitigation Grants funded through Nisqually Earthquake disaster assistance, according to Marty Best, deputy state coordinating officer – mitigation with Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD).

Best said communities and agencies that submitted letters to identify projects in April could qualify for the first round of competition for HGMP grants from the Nisqually Earthquake.

In 2002, he said there could be as much as \$10 million available for a second round of Nisqually-funded hazard mitigation grants.

"State and federal emergency management agencies want to fund a wide array of Washington projects that reduce hazard vulnerability and the potential of damage in a major disaster," said Best. Applications that were submitted by the Oct. 31 deadline will be competitively judged with grant awards to be made early

next year.

These hazard mitigation grants can be awarded only to state and local governments, registered private non-profit organizations with like-government services and facilities, federally recognized tribal governments, or Special Purpose Districts.

Applicants also must:

- Be in good standing with the National Flood Insurance Program.
- Conduct public meetings with all affected individuals and communities to obtain input and help develop potential projects and alternatives.
- Coordinate with agencies regarding critical areas or sensitive archaeological or historic sites.
- Formally identify the applicant agent, who has authorization to apply for and receive hazard mitigation program funding.

For further information about the hazard mitigation grant process, contact Joan Sterling, Mitigation Section Supervisor, at (360) 596-3107. Information also may be found at the EMD website www.wa.gov/wsem/.



Members of the team that wrote the successful National Aeronautics and Space Administration grant for the use of satellite information in emergency management are (around the table from left): Miles Logsdon, University of Washington; Terry Egan, Ute Weber, Ed Quarles, all of Washington Emergency Management Division (WEMD); Robin Weeks, University of Washington, and Ferruccio Crocetti, WEMD. (WEMD photo)

Emergency management partners land NASA grant

Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD), the University of Washington (UW) and the Western Disaster Center (WDC) have won a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) grant to study the use of satellite information in emergency management activities.

The grant, which could be for as much as \$703,500 over the next three years will underwrite a proposal entitled “Strategic and Practical Use of Remotely Sensed Data in Emergency Management” or SPURS-EM. It was one of 15 awarded by NASA in September in a competitive process involving 230 proposals.

“NASA has given us an exciting opportunity to be the first in the nation to evaluate the use of satellite information in support of continuing emergency management activities,” said Dr. Terry Egan, EMD’s principal investigator for the project.

“In the future, remote sensing data will play a central role in hazard preparedness, response, recovery, and more importantly, mitigation. As a result, state and local decision makers will have better information regarding the application of resources to emergency management issues,” according to Egan, who also manages EMD’s Plans, Exercise, Education and Training Unit.

Under the SPURS-EM partnership, the UW will take raw data, process it, and provide it to EMD in a finished, usable format. The WDC will evaluate the process and also provide outreach opportunities to promote the usage of this application in emergency management organizations throughout the United States.

The SPURS-EM application will provide satellite data such as radar, thermal, or photographic imagery to support the hazards analyses and predictive functions of EMD’s strategic forecast support system. This data will supplement other available information such as risk maps and historical data. A major portion of the effort will be to define and evaluate the contributions remote sensing technology can make to strategic hazard mitigation and integrated assessment.

Dr. Egan praised the work of the grant writing team which included Doctors Robin Weeks and Miles Logsdon from the UW; Rich Davies from WDC; and Ferruccio Crocetti, Alan Jakobitz, Ed Quarles, and Ute Weber from EMD.

“Everyone on the team brought a lot of knowledge and capability to the table. As a result, our proposal demonstrated a practical solution to a key problem and the ability to distribute that solution not only within Washington State, but nationally as well,” said Egan.

National Weather Service hosts winter workshop

There was a little bit of good news at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s annual briefing in Seattle, Sept. 26.

The outlook for the Pacific Northwest this winter, say National Weather Service (NWS) meteorologists, is for an increased variability in weather patterns, along with the possibility of more occurrences of weather extremes. Translation: Washington state and neighbors may see the Pineapple Express barreling into the region more often this year.

The state’s first responder, emergency management and winter recreation communities will benefit from a new service this winter in the form of extreme avalanche announcements. One place to look for these advance warnings is in the Mountain Weather section of the NWS website.

The experts on hand said things bode well for the state’s drought and power situations. Normal precipitation and temperatures should allow hydroelectric resources to catch up with demand; and certainly make drought conditions better, if not dispel them altogether.

Last, a note of interest from officials at SeaTac International Airport, who point out that fog—defined as when visibility is less than four miles—does not cause the majority of delays of SeaTac flights, as commonly thought. The culprit instead is low ceilings—when clouds are under an altitude of 5,000 feet.

Last December, for example, fog caused 15 percent of flight delays, while low ceilings accounted for more than 60 percent.

WSEMA officers re-elected

Incumbent officers of the Washington State Emergency Management Association were re-elected at the association’s fall meeting. The incumbents were John Scheer, treasurer; T.J. Harmon, first vice president; and Butch Aiken, second vice president.

Nisqually Earthquake disaster recovery shows steady progress at six months

Steady progress continues to mark the recovery work from the February 2001 Nisqually Earthquake, says Diane Offord, state coordinating officer for the disaster.

One of the major challenges is to address the dollar losses and number of disaster victims resulting from the magnitude 6.8 earthquake, she said. "While fatalities and injuries were few, the earthquake produced a record number of disaster aid registrations and property loss claims.

Offord said the property losses have been a particular challenge because earthquake damage often can be found only after detailed inspections and surveys. "We have had to learn how painstaking and thorough public facility inspections must be to properly document earthquake damages."

Working closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Washington Emergency Management Division staff thoroughly reviewed applications and claims from the recovery's first days.

"This was done to avoid the possibility of having to return aid money if eligibility rules were not followed," said Offord.

"FEMA required the state to be more precise in public agency assistance funding proposals project worksheets than it had been in previous disasters."

Washington was one of the first states to undergo the challenge of implementing several Stafford Act provisions that Congress enacted in late 2000. The changes particularly affected private non-profit organizations and their application requirements for 75 percent federal matching funds for public assistance projects, she said.

Yet, the recovery program has reached several milestones in the first six months since the earthquake.

Overall, Offord said the state expects the Nisqually recovery to take three to four years with eligible public assistance projects totaling

between \$50 million and \$100 million.

Early March estimates that pegged the earthquake damage at more than \$1 billion included losses to private industry and as well as losses covered by insurance, she said.

"We're prepared to provide long term help to our public assistance applicants," Offord added. "We will move to another project facility in late November and establish an E-Mail notification system to direct applicants to updated information on public assistance issues on the Washington Emergency Management homepage." The web address will be <www.emd.wa/wsem/>

Hazard Mitigation

The state currently expects about \$20 million to be available from the Nisqually Earthquake for hazard mitigation, according to Marty Best, manager of the state's Hazard Mitigation Unit.

Best said the hazard mitigation grants will be divided into two first phases—with each phase totaling as much as \$10 million in available grants. The first phase began last spring with letters of intent that were submitted last April. Applications for first phase grants were due Oct. 31. He said the second phase is scheduled to begin in February 2002.

An estimated \$1 to \$2 million also will be available for planning grants, Best said. The application process for planning grants will begin early next year.

Public Assistance

"We've made steady progress on the nearly 1,500 project worksheets that have been submitted by the 275 applicants for public assistance disaster aid," said Donna Voss, manager of the state's Public Assistance Unit for the Nisqually Earthquake. By the end of September, an estimated \$7.5 million in costs had been approved for funding.

Voss said the first round of public assistance disbursements mostly

went to claims for emergency protective actions and debris removal. She said more complicated projects involving such issues as prior maintenance; historic building preservation, scheduled renovations and insurance will take more time to process.

In addition, state recently received the state insurance commissioner criteria for determining the availability of reasonable earthquake insurance coverage for future damage to public buildings.

"Detailed damage assessments have uncovered less damage than expected in many of the public buildings. Much of the building damage also turned out to be non-structural, and therefore, less costly to repair," she said.

Individual Assistance

In the Individual Assistance Program area, a record 41,301 Nisqually registrations were received in the FEMA telephone registration system. The registrations totaled more than three times the number recorded in Washington in any previous federally declared disaster.

A record \$51.1 million was paid as of mid-September in Disaster Housing Assistance to 28,341 state residents. Another \$3.1 million has been paid to 2,500 applicants for the Individual and Family Grant Program.

Although on target to cease activity in the Individual Assistance Program by Oct. 31, the program expects that application reviews will result in additional payments of more than \$750,000 to more than 400 applicants, said John Vollmer, manager of the state's Individual Assistance Program Unit for the Nisqually Earthquake.

"We want to ensure that people get the full benefits to which they are entitled," Vollmer said. Program staff scrutinizes assistance reports to find people who may not be getting help because claims were not documented due to confusing instructions or program errors.

Personnel

Allan Josue was named the Emergency Management Division's (EMD) Telecommunications Plans manager Sept. 25. Josue was the division's telecommunications planner for the past 10 years.

Jim French became the division's new information technology system specialist 3 on Oct. 1. French was the project information technology system specialist 2 for the Nisqually Earthquake Disaster Field Office and had worked in the internet service provider industry.

Don Miller, EMD's telecommunications section supervisor, was recognized in September for his 10 years of service. During his EMD service, Miller has designed and installed the alert and warning system for Washington's Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program.

Mark Clemens, public information officer with the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program, was honored in August for his 20 years of state service. An EMD employee since 1990, he also worked with The Evergreen State College and Washington State Arts Commission.

Allen Jakobitz was named senior hazard analyst in EMD Nov. 1. An EMD employee since 1992, Jakobitz has been the division's Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program training and exercise coordinator.

Ken Parrish, manager of EMD's Operations Section, was honored in August for his 10 years of state service. He has served in EMD as an instructor in the hazardous materials pro-gram and as a manager and instructor in the former radiological program.

Bob Isaman received special EMD recognition in early October for his year of work to complete a county-by-county, statewide assessment to help local jurisdictions develop safeguards against terrorism.

SBA Farm Aid

Small businesses in 15 Washington counties may apply for low interest U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) loans as a result of severe weather damage suffered last June by eastern Washington ranchers and farmers.

Businesses in Adams, Benton, Douglas, Franklin, Grant, King, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lewis, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pierce, Skamania, Walla Walla, and Yakima are eligible to apply. The SBA announced the disaster loan assistance Oct. 2 after Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman last August declared an agricultural disaster in Benton, Grant and Yakima counties.

Loan application deadline is April 23, 2002. Information and forms may be obtained by writing to SBA at P.O. Box 13795, Sacramento, Calif., 95853-4795 or by calling (800) 488-5323.

FEMA fire grants

Three Washington fire districts received grants recently under the Assistance to Firefighters Program administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Recipients and grant awards were:

- Snohomish County Fire District No. 5, Sultan, \$54,000 for protective equipment.
- Klickitat County Fire District No. 2, Bickleton, \$22,500 for personal protective equipment.
- Okanogan County Fire District No. 4, \$58,000 for vehicles.

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